



29 July 1980

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Assessment of Iranian Exile Opposition

The Iranian exile opposition movement does not present a serious threat to the Khomeini regime at present. There is no evidence to suggest that the exiles have significant support within Iran--most of their backers are members of the discredited middle class. Their supporters in the military are being purged by the regime in the aftermath of the foiled coup plot. They have established ties to the Kurds and other minorities but the minorities remain wary of the exiles. []

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The exiles have established contact with a number of foreign governments. Only Iraq has provided significant support--including money, arms, bases and radio facilities for Bakhtiar and Oveisi. Egypt, Israel, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey have all talked to the exiles but have not given significant aid. []

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Former Prime Minister Bakhtiar is the best known exile leader. He is too discredited by his role as the Shah's last prime minister to secure much backing in Iran, but he does have supporters among the intellectual exiles in Paris. He is not known to have a significant military following. []

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General Oveisi does have some support in the military and has been the principle recipient of Iraqi aid. His reputation as the "butcher of Tehran" and rumors of continuing ties to the Pahlavi family have badly undermined his credibility as a challenger to Khomeini. Oveisi can probably mount limited military raids into Iran from Iraq but he cannot topple Khomeini. []

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General Jam remains in the UK and has yet to show a serious willingness to work with the other exiles or to take an active part on his own in bringing down Khomeini. []

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Hasan Nazih has formed his own exile organization and has the advantage of a good reputation as a revolutionary. There is no indication, however, that he has a significant following. Like two other Azarbayjanis-Ahmad Bani-Ahmad and Moghadam Maraghei--he appears to be on the periphery of the exile movement. []

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Former Prime Minister Ali Amini apparently meets with the other exiles but has no following of his own. []

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The exile leaders are extremely jealous of each other and refuse to work together. Bakhtiar and Oveisi in particular have long refused to cooperate effectively against Khomeini. []

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